What is claimed is:

1. A method of determining the position of a synchronization pattern in a serial stream of data comprising the steps of:

selecting a first position from a first plurality of possible positions;

testing the first selected position;

if the first selected position is not correct, selecting a second position from a second plurality of possible positions,

wherein each of the second plurality of possible positions is comprised of each of the first plurality of possible positions shifted by one position unit.

2. The method of claim 1, comprising the steps of:

testing the second selected position;

if the second selected position is not correct, selecting a third position from the first plurality of possible positions,

wherein the first plurality of possible positions does not include the first position.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the testing step includes:

rotating a segment of the serial stream of data so that the synchronization pattern is at a predetermined position.

4. The method of claim 3, comprising the steps of:

selecting a portion of the rotated segment;

selecting a portion of a previous rotated segment; and

combining the selected portions to form an output segment of the serial stream of data, wherein the output segment is longer than the segment.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the output segment of the serial stream of data comprises synchronization patterns at fixed positions.

6. The method of claim 4, comprising the steps of:

incrementing a first counter if the output segment contains a synchronization pattern at a predetermined position; and

incrementing a second counter if the output segment does not contain a synchronization pattern at the predetermined position.

7. The method of claim 6, comprising determining a state of synchronization as a function of the first and second counters.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of selecting includes determining a subset of the first plurality of possible positions as a function of a segment of the serial stream of data.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of selecting includes determining a subset of the first plurality of possible positions as a function of a previous selection.